CLAIMS:

1.   A method for synchronizing the playback of a pre-recorded program stored in a plurality of playback devices,
5   the method comprising the steps of:

receiving incoming program content signals comprised of a series of frames, said program content signals including a string of closed-caption (CC) characters;

sampling   the   string   of   said   CC   characters   at   a
10 predetermined   sampling   interval,   wherein   said   sampling interval represents at least one CC character for each frame;

storing   a   sequence   of   sampled   CC   characters   and   the corresponding frame according to a predetermined format in a memory; and,

15   simultaneously   displaying   a   desired   segment   of   said program   content   signals   between   the   plurality   of   said playback devices in response to a user's request.

2.   The   method   of   claim   1,   wherein   the   step   of
20 simultaneously displaying said desired segment includes the steps of:

inputting said user's request identifying the location of said desired program content signals to the plurality of said playback devices;

retrieving said desired program content signals 5 responsive to said user's request from the respective memory of said playback devices; and,

displaying said desired program content signals for viewing by the plurality of said playback devices.

10 3. The method of claim 1, wherein said incoming program content signals are from one of an antenna, a cable, a direct satellite, the Internet, a fiber optical cable, a telephone line, and an external storage device.

15 4. The method of claim 1, wherein the plurality of said playback devices is communicating together so that the display of said desired program segment is selectively synchronized.

20 5. The method of claim 1, wherein said sampling interval corresponds to the duration of a single frame.

6. A method for synchronizing the playback of a program between a plurality of playback devices, the method comprising the steps of:

analyzing incoming program content signals including a
5   series of frames and closed-caption (CC) signals;

retrieving said CC signals from said program content signals;

formatting said retrieved CC signals and the corresponding segment of said program content signals
10 according to predetermined criteria into a storage device;

transmitting a request, by a first playback device to a second playback device, to retrieve a desired segment of said program content signals stored in the respective storage device for viewing; and,

15 synchronously displaying said desired segment of said program content signal contents by said first playback device and said second playback device.

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7.   The method of claim 6, wherein the step of transmitting said request includes the steps of:

entering program parameters in said first playback device identifying the location of said desired program 5 content signals in the storage device of said second playback device using a user control; and,

retrieving said desired program content signals from the storage device from said second playback device.

10   8.   The method of claim 6, wherein said step of formatting said stored CC signals is performed according to predetermined criteria.

9.   The method of claim 6, wherein the step of 15 retrieving said CC signals from said program content signals further includes the steps of:

sampling said CC signals and the corresponding segment of said program content signals at a predetermined sampling frequency to generate a sequence of sampled CC data elements; 20 and,

storing said sequence of sampled CC data elements in said storage device.

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10. The method of claim 6, wherein said incoming program content signals are from one of an antenna, a cable, a direct satellite, the Internet, a fiber optical cable, a

5 telephone line, and an external storage device.

11. The method of claim 6, wherein the plurality of said playback devices is communicating together so that the display of said desired program segment is selectively

10 synchronized.

12. The method of claim 6, wherein said sampling interval corresponds to the duration of a single frame.

15 13. A system for synchronizing the playback of a program between a plurality of playback devices, comprising:

a signal receiving unit for receiving program content signals, the program content signals including a series of frames and closed-caption (CC) signals;

20 an analyzing unit for analyzing the program content signals to identify said CC data;

a data sorting unit for extracting and separating said CC signals from the program content signals and for sampling said CC signals and the corresponding program content signals at a predetermined sampling interval;

5 a clock generator for generating said predetermined sampling interval;

a memory for storing a sequence of said extracted CC signals and the corresponding program content signals for a subsequent retrieval; and,

10 a playback unit, coupled to said memory means, for selectively controlling a display of the program content signals based on a user's request.

14. The system of claim 13, further comprising a user
15 control unit for inputting said user's request to jump to a desired segment of the program content signals.

15. The system of claim 14, wherein said user control comprises one of an infrared remote control and a keyboard.

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16. The system of claim 13, wherein the system is external to one of a television receiver and a computer monitor.

5   17. The system of claim 13, wherein the incoming program content signals are from one of an antenna, a cable, a direct satellite, the Internet, a fiber optical cable, a telephone line, and an external storage device.

10   18. The system of claim 13, wherein the plurality of said playback devices is communicating together so that the display of said desired program segment is selectively synchronized.

15   19. The system of claim 13, wherein said clock generator synchronizes the internal clock of the plurality of said playback devices.

20. The system of claim 13, further comprising an 20 extractor for retrieving the desired program content signals from said memory.

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21. The system of claim 13, wherein said predetermined sampling interval corresponds to the duration of a single frame.

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